

over \$100,000, hardly people who are needy, while 75 percent of the seniors covered by Medicare live on less than \$24,000 a year, and they are going to be the losers.

The Republicans are going to rob middle- and low-income seniors of their choice of doctors, access to hospitals, and high quality health care to give tax cuts to a handful of wealthy Americans. It is unconscionable.

The Republican bill is bad legislation. The Republicans know it cannot stand up to scrutiny. That is why they are making a mockery of the legislative process. No opportunity for comment from the 37 million affected Americans and they will ram this through the House in just a few short hours of debate. That is why I held Medicare forums in my district so my constituents could be heard. And I did hear from seniors, their family members, hospitals, doctors, nurses, home care providers, and these wonderful people shined a very bright light on why the Republicans need to gag the public in order to ram their bill through.

Let me tell you what people have to say. Two working women with mothers in their 80's told me their mothers receive home nursing care covered by Medicare. This care allows their mothers to remain in their homes. Without this care these working women would either have to quit their jobs and become nurses or spend every penny they have to pay for a nursing home. It is not small change, because nursing home care averages about \$40,000 a year.

Doctors told me that these cuts will force them to make unethical choices every day. Doctors will have the technology to alleviate pain or improve the quality of life but they will not have the money to use it. It is called rationing, and doctors will be forced to do it every day.

To their credit, the Massachusetts Medical Society has broken ranks with the AMA and does not support this bill. And the director of elder services in Berkshire County shared the following story with me and the one I want to leave you with.

In Ashley Falls, Phil and Agnes are waging a battle with her advanced Parkinson's disease. Both are determined to stay together at home, but her current care needs demand so much of Phil. Her disease prevents any movement. Through the VNA, Agnes' Medicare provided home health care aides once each day and physical therapy twice each week. Elder services provides respite for Phil twice a week. A home health aide cares for Agnes so Phil can shop and run errands and maybe even go to the doctor himself. Medicare does not cover it all. Phil does feeding, toileting, and dressing for Agnes as well as laundry, cooking, and cleaning, but assistance the Medicare-funded aide gives daily makes this huge task doable. There are no children to help.

I do not know, but how do the Republicans think this couple is going to manage? The truth is, they are not thinking about the human consequences of this enormous Medicare cut. The truth is they just do not care what happens to Agnes and Phil. And for those reasons, I intend to vote tomorrow against their bill.

SENIORS NEED NOT BE SCARED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington [Mrs. SMITH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I have been listening tonight and listening to some of the statements I have heard. And I have worked with the elderly for years, chaired the long-term care committee in our State, have worked in the nursing homes and delivered meals to the elderly in their homes. And tonight I think there is a whole lot of calls that need to be made into our districts from 430-plus legislators telling these people the truth. We can argue over the future. We can argue over our assumptions, but we have to tell them the truth.

When I heard tonight a quote from an older lady saying, and this was from the lady from North Carolina, from a person in her district, she said, without Medicare I will have nothing. I pictured faces that I know.

I hope that women from North Carolina assured her there was nothing before Congress that took away her medical care, because what I could picture is them listening to all of this and believing their medical bills are not going to be paid next month or next year or the next year. And I think the important thing is that we all tell them, please, do not be frightened. We are trying to save this system. And it is important that you know you do not have to be frightened. Because you see, what you are saying by not calling them and telling them we are talking about systems, we are not talking about tomorrow for you, what you are doing is you are scaring them. And you need to tell them they do not have to worry. If you do anything less than that, you are using the elderly for your political gain, whether you are Republican or Democrat. And that is so shameful to these vulnerable people, sitting in their homes listening to TV night after night, listening to this.

I also heard earlier, we are going to dismantle Medicare. No. That is not true. No matter who says it. No matter who is listening, that is not true. The good thing that happens with untruths is the future proves them out. If after this vote next month you find out by a letter in the mail, a proclamation in the newspaper, that Medicare has been dismantled, then you know tonight what was said here was true. But you will find next month, time is going to show that is not true.

If next month all of a sudden you are required to have a great co-pay or you

are forced into some system you do not want, then you will know what was said tonight is true. But let me tell you what you are going to find.

No one should be frightened, if you are sitting in your home, if you are just not sure, do not be frightened. The trustees report in February frightened me. I was a new legislator. I had got that Presidential report from his trustees when it said Medicare was going to be bankrupt. And I thought, I have heard every so many years Medicare is going to go bankrupt and I do not agree with it. I cannot believe it. The Federal Government has a lot of money and they will make it work. So I started going through it on a flight home. Takes me about 7 hours to fly home to the west coast.

When I got done with the actuaries, and I do know how to read these reports, I found out it was true. The amount of imbalance is not sure. It is hard to tell how long I will live and how much we will take out of it or what health care costs will be, but for sure it is not stable. Some say it is, \$100 billion, some say \$200 billion. It is just not stable.

One thing that is for sure is middle of next year we start draining that trust fund, the money we have put in, and we take more money out than goes in. We know that for sure. But I resolved, when I read that report, that I was going to join an effort that would stabilize it, secure it, and then I found out something else. You cannot secure it after 15 years. I am 45. When I hit Medicare, I am with the baby boomers. I blow it up.

There are two-to-one, my two, I have six grandkids and I have enough. Some people do not have enough. And they cannot sustain the number of elderly that will be on it. But for right now, I want to make a commitment.

I will tell you, do not worry. It is going to be stabilized and this is a responsible approach tomorrow. And you will have Medicare tomorrow, next week, and next year.

MEDICARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. DEUTSCH].

Mr. DEUTSCH. Mr. Speaker, again, I appreciate it because I have asked four times for my colleagues on the other side to yield for a specific question.

In response to statements that were made from four different of my Republican colleagues, I think it is symptomatic that they refuse to yield, that they refuse to engage in a dialog on this issue because the truth is, the truth is on our side. It is the old maxim: When the truth is on your side and you have the facts, that is what you argue. When the law is on your side, that is what you argue. And when you have nothing, all you do is argue.